

Visit to Russellville ATC Brings Teachers of the Year Together



2003 KY Tech Teacher of the Year Sharon Grace, left,
with 2000 KY Teacher of the Year
Education Cabinet Deputy Secretary Mardi Montgomery



1998 KY Tech Postsecondary Teacher of the Year and Russellville ATC Principal Don Evans, center with Sharon Grace, left and Mardi Montgomery.

Ask any teacher to explain why they do what they do and a similar answer will always arise: “to make a difference in the life of a child.” Although that statement may be short on words, it’s long on substance and the staying force behind those that make a career out of teaching.

Another similarity found among teachers is the ability to make that difference in those lives and quietly blend into the background and give the spotlight to those they teach.

The KY Tech system and the Kentucky Department of Education are saturated with instructors just like that who are quick to give away praise and shun the limelight, but once a year one is singled out from each system as Teacher of the Year, to have a moment in the sun; a quick 15 minutes of fame before returning to the real stars, their students.

A recent visit to the Russellville ATC brought Education Cabinet Deputy Secretary Mardi Montgomery, herself a former Ky. Teacher of the Year, together with two former KY Tech Teachers of the Year.



Deputy Secretary Montgomery speaks with Jessica Shutt, a student in the computer aided drafting class.

Health Sciences Instructor Sharon Grace and Principal Don Evans have both experienced the pleasure of receiving the top honor in 2003 and 1998 respectfully.

“I have enjoyed every minute and if I had to do it all over again, I would,” said Grace, speaking of her career. “I continue to have a burning desire to teach. It’s something that I’ve always wanted to do as well as being a nurse. I have been blessed to be able to be both in my lifetime.”

“I think there are a lot of instructors who could be ‘Teachers of the Year’ in the system that go unrecognized,” said Evans. “For those who are, it is an exciting time...it is really the pinnacle of a teacher’s career.”



Welding Instructor Rex Cundiff describes some of the integrated activities that take place among the programs at the ATC.

Mr. Evans and Ms. Grace are both modest about their achievements preferring to recognize both peers and students around them. Deputy Secretary Montgomery shares the same view as well.

“I’m impressed with the quality of students and programs offered at this area technology center. The instructors are knowledgeable of their programs; dedicated to their students; and offer an opportunity for each to develop through a rigorously integrated academic and technical curricula,” said Montgomery. “Mr. Evans and Ms. Grace both exemplify what it means to be a Teacher of the Year.”

The visit was highlighted by a tour of the school, talking to students and participating in activities. Ms. Grace's health sciences students gave presentations pertaining to their State HOSA Conference display, a trip they took to the University of Kentucky's Gross Anatomy Lab, an exercise session by her wellness class; and an overview of other displays, projects and textbooks.

"Our entire staff enjoyed meeting Mrs. Montgomery," said Evans. "She has a positive, friendly personality that makes everyone she meets feel like they are important. I was especially impressed with the way she talked to each student in our classes and asked them questions about their school, family, and plans for the future."

The visit was used to learn about the students, the teachers and the classes at the school. The day was filled with discussing the strong points of KY Tech and education in general and ways to make it better. The time was spent thanking others and crediting them with a job well done, both teacher and student.

**Information Technology
Instructor Grayson Wells**



**CAD Instructor
Chris Hoffman**



**Electrical Technology
Instructor Barry Bond**



**Machine Tool Technology
Instructor Mitch Cundiff**





Health Sciences Class

That is how Mardi Montgomery, Sharon Grace and Don Evans work the program. They are more interested in how others are doing than what they've accomplished. They are more interested in how to take a great system and make it greater. They are more interested in making a difference in a child's life than hanging an award on their office walls.

That's why they have been recognized for their achievements. That's why they have individually reached that "pinnacle" in their careers and that's why they are Teachers of the Year.

Tech has a bright future. The heightened awareness of the value of technical education has been echoed from educational as well as economic development experts alike.

SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) accreditation is around the corner, bringing with it a kind of prestige unequalled by any educational system in the country, but more importantly bringing more opportunities for students to transition from a secondary to a postsecondary education. The American Diploma Project will systematically prepare a student to not only go to college but also prepare that student to go to work.

In the Classrooms



**Office Technology
Student Lance Bibb**



**Health Sciences Students
Samanth Berry, left
and Misty Bagby**



**Health Sciences Students Ashley Bryson,
left and Jessica Inscow**



**Office Technology
Student Andrea Phelps**



**Health Sciences
Student Misty Bain**



Ky. Education Cabinet's Deputy Secretary
Mardi Montgomery

The day spent at the Russellville ATC serves as an example of how two entities, academic and technical education can blend together to create one product, a successful student. Ms. Montgomery, Mr. Evans and Ms. Grace are teachers first and foremost; neither academic nor technical just teachers. Add all the other titles to them and we see who they are and what they have accomplished. But ask them what they aspire to do and they will say, "to make a difference in the life of a child."



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